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NIL SINE MAGNO VITA LABORE DEDIT MORTALIBUS

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In a recent number of the *Journal* (XIV, 388) readers will find an interesting account of the building of a real *Pons in Rheno Factus* by a second-year high-school class. All who participated in the construction of this bridge will doubtless remember how they and Caesar did it, long after they forget where he was going and why. The achievement will certainly leave a less bitter taste in their mouths than the immortal Julius' ablative absolutes and subjunctives and will furnish material for anecdotes about their Latin course when the pupils are old and gray. More than that, this picnic excursion must have furnished pupils and teachers a better chance of getting acquainted than classroom routine ever could, and it is a pity that we cannot all of us achieve this earlier in the year than the date at which the famous chapter usually comes. With the desire to get acquainted and to create a live interest in a subject, whether it be Latin or woodcarving, no sensible person can have any quarrel, and least of all is there cause for quarrel in the spirit of this little incident. But in spite of this the reading of the article has opened up an old sore that irritates me so much now that I cannot avoid crying out to the world about it.

To begin in Socratic style: We admit, do we not, that, of the many things in the world, some are worth our special interest and some are not? If the *Pons in Rheno Factus* belongs to those that are worth our special interest, why does it? Are the beams, piling, poles, and the method of getting them into shape the cause? To my way of thinking they are not. No one but an engineer or an antiquarian can have much abiding curiosity about that. And yet how heavy upon us is the spell of that bridge! No high school is complete now unless it has one or two miniature

replicas of it. My own pupils once tried their hands at the construction of one or more of them the same year in which they presented me with lifelike reproductions in potato and toothpick of the jointless elks in Caesar's zoo. One of my colleagues once offered her class the chance to escape the spring term examination by constructing bridges instead, and my memory is that fewer than the bridge-devotees would imagine took advantage of the opportunity. I have often wondered why the ability that both boys and girls, the country over, show in constructing these bridges is not held up to the manual-training people as proof of the practical value of the classics. However, it may be just as well as it is; they would probably prove that the dexterity was due to courses in whittling that the young people had had with them.

What is the real value of the bridge-chapter? My answer would be that, if the bridge is worth our crossing, it is because it is such an excellent concrete example of the Romans' determination to be superior to the difficulties that beset them, and I am under the impression that most of us lose sight of this in the usual maze of beams and piling. However, be the importance of the chapter what it may, it has certainly received more prominence than its Latinity or subject-matter deserves. But I am now in danger of committing the same mistake. The bridge party was surely harmless enough in itself and it merely scratched the scab of that old sore. What really laid bare the wound was the frank statement of the purpose of the party. It was planned in order "to give the freest rein to the play instinct and at the same time get the clearest possible idea" of how the bridge was built, in order that boys and girls "who like to play" might have their day. In fact, the concluding paragraph of the article calls on us Latin teachers to "make more effort to combine work and play in the mastery of difficult things" and so "beguile the young people by the spirit of play to undertake and perform formidable tasks." Of course this has a familiar ring. We have heard the theory expounded for some time and have seen it in practice, and I, for one, still believe it is the ruination and damnation of American education. To put it in colder form it amounts to saying: Work is and must be disagreeable. To get work done we must beguile the young person

into thinking that the work is not work but play. If a nation of thinkers and doers can be reared on such pap we old fogies must keep still and not spoil the success. But as yet some of us are unconvinced and unreconstructed. An extremely readable protest against the idea that a child works better if he is beguiled into thinking that work is play is found in *Harper's Magazine* for October, 1919. Teachers and principals, especially principals, will do well to read it. The writer, Wilson Follett, has proved beyond doubt that one child at least prefers to distinguish between work and play, and finds play more interesting when it comes as the reward of a piece of work completed. Surely our own experiences have shown us that this is no isolated case. But no matter whether this point be true or not, is it not our duty, as teachers, to encourage, or at least develop the work-instinct? Most of us grownups still need to encourage it in ourselves. When shall the young man or woman begin to realize that while there is play in the world there is also work, and that the harder he works the more he will enjoy play and that excess of play renders him less fit for work and less able to enjoy play? Must he wait until his school career is over? The criticism of the business world on our educational output seems to imply that the work instinct has suffered atrophy or has never been born.

The popularity of the play-instinct theory and the lagging interest in the classics have combined to rush us Latin teachers into an effort "to make it interesting," and while we were rushing we could not always take time to see just what our goal was. Will you think back with me over the efforts we have made and see whether they have been on a plane worthy of the dignity of our subject? To me there is something disappointing in the indecent abandon with which our classical world has endeavored to revive the flagging interest, even though our efforts have revealed Protean adaptability. My chagrin is the more deep when I confess that I am recalling *quae ipse miserrima vidi et quorum pars magna fui*. We have organized clubs, given plays in Latin and the vernacular, dramatized every conceivable episode in the authors read; we have entertained friend and foe at Roman dinners and reclined in unseemly angles in the frantic effort to imbibe the Roman

atmosphere; we have draped helpless young people in togas "made by themselves" (another proof of the practical value of the classics!); we have organized Roman states and with more zeal than accuracy learned all about Roman politics and government; we have dressed dolls in Roman garments and in the peaceful atmosphere of the classroom we have played a quiet social game of cards with nothing at stake except the principal parts of verbs; we have even played games in "pinning armor on a Roman soldier, blindfolded." "Handsome, slender youths (I am quoting from the printed word) draped in cheesecloth, with graceful rhythmic motion have paced the green, as *tibicines*, while the weird note of the *tibia* was made on a violin by a boy secreted in a clump of shubbery"; pupils have been "delighted to grunt as pigs" (in Latin apparently, though the pigs belonged to Circe); victrolas hidden in more shrubbery have substituted for *femina nunc cantat*; lines have been so well spoken "that young children of the neighborhood repeated for days afterward Latin phrases, accurately and distinctly"; other actors have read their lines so successfully that "even spectators who knew little Latin could catch enough of the jokes to enjoy the occasion" (this of course by those trained by the direct method).

Interest has certainly been created, and some of us have really felt that it was an abiding interest that would save the day for the classics. Others of us are less sanguine, perhaps because we lack the spontaneity essential to make these side shows a success. To those who feel satisfied with the results I have nothing to say, but it has occurred to me that many a young, conscientious teacher has become discouraged because she has no particular theatrical ability, no dramatic talent, no aptitude for card-playing, no taste or knack for costume-making or bridge-building, and as a result has come to regard herself a "useless burden to the soil." Perhaps such a one may gather a little comfort from hearing somebody once, just once, confess himself skeptical about the value of the "stunts" we have attempted outside of class, and extremely weary of this effort to be entertaining.

To borrow the phraseology of a famous educator and statesman, have we not been encouraging the side shows to the neglect

of the circus? It is certainly true that the circus proper has often lacked interest and something should be done to enliven it, but my contention is that the circus should be improved and the side shows dropped—unless we can show that the side show is really an integral part of the circus.

Interest in the classics is lagging; in fact, interest in any sort of study that requires careful application with no promise of financial reward is lagging. Perhaps we are unwise to be kicking against the pricks. And still some of us will continue to do so until we have a Pauline vision. The problem then is to make our kicks most effective. Can this be done by side shows and free rein for the play-instinct? I cannot believe it. The only thing that will develop abiding interest in a subject is the conviction on the part of the pupil that he is "getting on," and to "get on" in Latin he must feel that he is mastering vocabulary and idiom and developing a moderate ability to understand what he is reading without inseparable contact with lexicon, notes, and—ponies. If this can be accomplished there will be plenty of opportunity to introduce him to the rich by-products of his classical course: a decent grasp of his own language and its literature, an understanding of ancient public and private life, an appreciation for style in art and literature, and other more intangible things. Need this be dull and uninteresting, and can it be done by the average teacher in the circus proper? It can, if we are willing to begin early and recognize that it cannot be done at once, and that it will offer little opportunity for competing with more spectacular efforts in other departments.

Interest on the part of the pupils in the literary side of what they read will perhaps be very slow in appearing. The modern world will have none of that except by compulsion. But it has been my experience that there are other things that the average pupil finds surprisingly interesting.

One of these is the study of mottoes and proverbial expressions. Few can be extracted from the Gallic War and the War on Catiline but collections of them are not hard to find. (Some beginners' books have fairly representative lists.) Most teachers will prefer to browse around in Latin literature and hunt for them. Not only Virgil but even Horace and Terence contain many a one which fits

the immature pupils' vocabulary and Latin experience. A play of Terence will furnish enough for sight reading for many a day. Year after year I have had the pleasure of introducing pupils to the motto of the United States. The general impression seems to be that *E Pluribus Unum*, since it appears on dollars means "one of several" and carries with it the comforting thought that there are more where this one comes from. Even college classes are surprisingly uninformed as to its meaning.

It is an unusual class indeed that does not enjoy memorizing, *fortis fortuna adiuvat; unum cum noris, omnis noris; quot homines, tot sententiae; quod fors feret feremus aequo animo; quid verbis opus est; cantilenam eandem canis; dictum sapienti sat est; senectus ipsast morbus; satis est suum officium facere; modo liceat vivere, est spes; mala mens, malus animus*—but the list is endless. We forget in our supersophistication that what is so old and almost trite to us is even fresh and interesting to the younger generation. And not only is their interest aroused; they learn in this way vocabulary, forms, syntax, and idiom that can be mastered in no easier way and at the same time come into touch with the eternally human element of the classical world.

Curiously enough the moralizing tone of much in the comedy that is quotable, in Horace and other writers has a peculiar appeal. The longer passages of this nature, written on the board, serve as excellent sight reading. Even Martial and Juvenal supply material that the wise teacher can edit successfully for high-school Seniors and Juniors. No great command of Latin is necessary to read, in this way, for example, Martial's idea of what makes *vitam beatiorem* (x. 47).

Roman life becomes more real if the pupil makes only a blundering rendering of Martial's Roman Day (iv. 8); more real, I suspect, than any toga "made by himself" ever would. He will undoubtedly feel very closely kin to the Roman boys if he but hears of Horace's famous *Orbilius plagosus* and Martial's *ludi magister*, who is so aptly described as *scelerate, invisum pueris virginibusque caput*. *Ludi magister parce simplici turbae* becomes a favorite quotation.

Another thing that the average pupil enjoys is anecdote, and surely there is nothing better suited to give a picture of Greek and Roman life. Cicero's works, especially the philosophical, teem

with them. Even a few months in Latin will be enough preparation for reading, at sight, some of these. Second-year people seem to find unusual interest in the story of Ennius and Nasica exchanging calls, and in the discovery that even in Rome "not at home" was as white a lie as it is with us. The teacher who wishes an excellent collection of some readable anecdotes can find them in Walford's *Extracts from Cicero* (Oxford Press). Many of these are too hard for the young pupil to attempt, and every teacher must be the judge of what will be practicable for her own classes.

No one in his right mind assumes that all this can be done by every teacher with every class, every year, or that it need be done. But certainly the teacher who will give it a trial in the classes from which she thinks there is some hope of response will get results that will amaze and satisfy. The study of such bits as these will do for the pupil what we really want done; he will gain some idea of what the Romans were like, how they talked, what they thought and why they acted as they did, and he will be getting it largely by his own efforts and feel that his course is successful. What seems to me one of the most beneficial things about it all is that it gives the young pupil something to think about besides the concrete things, bridges, weapons, walls, camps, togas, etc., and will make it possible for him to understand a few abstractions. A painful and recent experience has impressed on my mind the absolute inability of the average student, even in college, to grasp abstractions. A Sophomore girl recently was expounding in her own words what Cicero has to say about the advisability of discarding an old friend for a new. Although she insisted before she began that it was perfectly clear to her, it was quite obviously a jumble of "old friends, old and new horses and familiar scenery," and she wound up by announcing to the class that the conclusion was that "we can all of us love scenery as well as animals." Truly ideas are hard to see and togas and bridges much easier!

The reader may possibly feel that even a small amount of this sort of thing will confuse the circus proper and that what I suggest will bring the side show and the circus under the same tent and spoil both of them. Only a fair trial of the suggestions will decide that question. My hope is that even if it does cause some con-

fusion, the side show that I advocate *is* a part of the circus and is worth attending, in and of itself. But whatever objections may be raised to the preceding, there can be no similar charge brought against what follows.

Nearly every class will be found to have a surprising interest in words, just words. There are quite naturally a few who prefer to take words as they are, ignore any effort at study of changes in the spelling of root words, in the effect of suffixes and prefixes, and who object to carrying the words back to "Adam and Eve." But such are the exception. The majority will see at once the "practical" value of doing this sort of thing. And when I learn from my classes that "inappropriate" is derived from *in- ad-propius* and means "to approach into" or that to "take something not your own is to inappropriate it"; that "querulous" comes from *quaero* and "is applied to one who questions, likes to inquire into everything, leads to the idea of doubting and instability," I am convinced that there is practical value in the study of words. Truly it is a disgrace to our schools to turn out people who admit that they have no idea whatever about the meaning of autonomous, who define anarchy "as something like what the emperor of Germany was," and nativity as "having something to do with patriotism"—and we do it, even now. Of course all misunderstood words are not of Latin origin, and the Latin teacher is not responsible for what teachers in other departments leave undone. And yet the Latin teacher can help to fix the habit of trying to understand the meaning of words so firmly that the pupil will be dissatisfied with superficial and hazardous guesses.

But apart from this form of practical value in the study of words there is another very practical one that the pupil soon begins to recognize. After a few days of study of prefixes, suffixes, root words, peculiar changes in the spelling of roots, he finds that he is not thumbing his lexicon nearly so much as before. The pupil who can tell at a glance the difference between *incidit*, and *incidit*, *accidit* and *accedit* (there are not many even in these ideally conducted classes) will not long be blind to the fact that the study of words is a time-saver. Why do we have continual and persistent mistranslation of *vires* and *viri*; *opus*, *opera*, *opes*; *deligo*,

diligo; *certis* and *ceteris*; *constitit* and *constituit*; *moriri* and *morari*; and so on without end? Because we have allowed the pupils to think that half a look was better than one good one. Nothing but continual insistence on careful reading and repeated effort on the part of the teacher to drive the distinctions home will change the situation. The reason why my own classes still confuse ordinary words, do not recognize fundamental roots or the effect of a certain prefix, is that I have not taken the time to make them see that this is all-important and economical of time. And the best way to do this is to drill on these things a few minutes every day so that the meaning of a word or a prefix is as clear as it can be apart from the context.

And last but not least—idioms. Is there a class in America that does not waste valuable time in thumbing the lexicon and soiling the notes in search for suitable translations for those oft-recurring combinations of words that we call idioms? What class will approach even such combinations as *nihil aliud nisi*, *quin etiam*, *plurimum valet*, *nescio quo modo*, *optimus quisque*, without hesitation? Both Caesar and Cicero, in the works usually read in high school, are full of idiomatic turns that the young people enjoy learning when their attention is once called to them. They like to turn respectable English into “absurd” Latin equivalents and feel that they are getting on—and they are. Anybody who can give the idiomatic Latin for “somebody or other came in; it happened that; add to this the fact that; what’s the reason why; what in the world did you say,” etc., has “got on” very well and is getting such evident enjoyment out of the work that bridge parties, sewing bees, and dialogues will not be needed, and more than that, the “Great God Jargon” will have lost several votaries (*Classical Journal*, XV, 244). And most important of all, the teacher is also getting on. Think of the time that she (may we see the day when *he* will not be out of place!) may devote to *learning Latin*, to browsing around in works that she will otherwise leave entirely alone because of the inertia from which we all suffer, or because she is worn out by engineering some other sort of side show.

There is certainly nothing original about any of these suggestions, and my only reason for presuming to bore you with them

is to convince both you and myself that they are worth trying and **trying** again, to judge from the very obvious results that even faulty efforts have had. At any rate trying them will give absolutely no encouragement to the "play-instinct" in either pupil or teacher, and that after all is the important thing. Some of us are convinced that Mr. Wilson Follett is right in his conclusion: "Whenever we have failed temporarily with Barbara we have always discovered in the end that it was because we had asked too little to interest her, not too much for her to accomplish." And Barbara is a girl "who likes to play"!

Nil sine magno
Vita labore dedit mortalibus.